1: Herskovits SV3 Haiti SV3

● 756
791

[For information on the curing and magical functions of the hungan, see also category 793.]

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from its ill effects after the evil has been exorcised, must also know the forces they are combating if they are to achieve any measure of success. By the same token, practitioners of black magic must know what steps may be taken to counteract their *wangas* so that, if necessary, they can in turn call forth supernatural emissaries to strengthen the evil impulses originally set in motion. In this sense, therefore, the *hungan*, the *gangan*, the *bocor*, and the *caplata* employ essentially the same techniques and operate with the same forces, the difference between them being one of degree rather than of kind. "*Hungan, c'est magazin. Gaigné un pile marchandise* — The *hungan* is like a shop. He has a lot of merchandise," says the Haitian, quoting a well-known proverb as he makes the point.

In the main, it can be said that though the *hungan* and the *gangan* practice magic, their main preoccupation is with the *loa* — the maladies they send to affect a man and his possessions — while the *bocor* is concerned almost exclusively with setting in motion the agents that actuate black magic, and the *caplata* dabbles in anything that is wanted. One important means whereby the sorcerer obtains his powers is the evil *loa*, but there is this essential difference between them: the gods of the *hungan* are family gods who come to him through the natural course of inheritance, endowing him with the *connaissance* that gives him his control over the supernatural world, while the *bocor* buys his gods. And when a god is bought, it is always acquired so as to enhance the position of its owner at all costs, despite the knowledge that the power thus purchased is dearly bought, bringing its own eventual punishment. Sometimes an ambitious *hungan* adds to his familial *loa* other "purchased" gods, but this is resented by the deities who have given him his powers, so that in time these benevolent powers take all means to humble and crush him. Furthermore, gods acquired in this way pass on to unwilling members of their owner's family and, after a generation or two of mischief-making, must be "restrained" or "banished." A number of

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points — or oblique designations — makes clear the distinction between the two, for the *bocor* invariably and certain *hungans* on occasion are called *nèg' mazi maza*, "Negro who wears his back to the front," or, again, those who "serve with both hands." Though by no means shunning the services of the practitioner, the Haitians of Mirebalais nevertheless look upon the working of magic with a cynicism that is reflected in the gossip about happenings that befall all who practice it, in any form, and particularly those who work evil magic. It is said: "The *hungan* often dies an evil death, and the *bocor* who makes *wanga* almost always. These people kill each other by magic"; or one hears of a woman who one day went to the cemetery to obtain materials needed for her unsavory work and was struck and killed by the thunderbolts which are believed to smite sorcerers.

To keep his reputation, a practitioner of magic, good or evil, must make continual demonstration of his powers. For example, in prescribing a magical cure, it is incumbent upon the *hungan* or *mambu* to foresee all eventualities, even where the directions are not followed, a prescription which is regarded as a strong check on the charlatan and is the reason why a practitioner is prudent in refusing to accept a case beyond his power to aid, since persistent failure to achieve cures will lose a *hungan* his reputation and his practice. Naturally, certain practitioners do not fail on occasion to turn the anxiety of a family over a serious illness to their own account, but inasmuch as the cures made by a man are the most adequate proof of his power, the feeling is that his clients have an unquestioned safeguard against chicanery. This point of view, it may be noted, is of undoubted importance in perpetuating a living faith in magic.

An example of how rapidly a practitioner of magic can lose prestige when some mishap occurs to him was encountered when an important *gangan* of the valley was brought into court charged with the theft of a pig which he claimed was

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So it had been with the subject peoples of the island ever since its discovery. The Spaniards introduced a wide variety of European diseases to Española (an epidemic of smallpox in 1500 was estimated to have killed 200,000 Indians in the island) which did not disappear as the Indians gave way to Negroes. Three centuries of the slave trade brought blacks from many parts of Africa, and with them most of the deadliest plagues of that continent. During the flourishing days of French control over Saint-Domingue, Negro slaves were afflicted by a wide variety of diseases, the commonest being yaws, tetanus, intestinal worms, malaria, leprosy, smallpox, and scrofula, although others were certainly not absent. Only to yellow fever, probably brought with them from Africa, did the blacks seem to develop a certain immunity. Most plantations had a doctor in attendance, but medical skill during the eighteenth century was not advanced enough to cope successfully with scourges whose cause was then unknown.

After freedom there were fewer doctors than ever, less sanitation, and a worse diet. When a person was ill, his one alternative to suffering the disease to take its course was to consult the Vodun priest, for the commonly accepted explanation of disease was a spiritual one. If God (that is, the Christian God) had sent the illness, nothing could be done except to bear it, for God's will was unalterable; if it were the result of magic worked by some enemy, the identity of that enemy and the magical means used must be ferreted out so that countermagic might be employed. Vodun practitioners were, indeed, quite as important in their rôle of healing as in performing strictly religious rites. In the course of their efforts to cure disease they often stumbled upon homely but effective cures; no doubt also the mental effect of the patient's faith sometimes helped him to recover, even when the medicines administered had no specific value.

The "triple threat" to Haitian health is the morbid group: malaria, hookworm, and yaws. The first two are familiar enough in parts of the United States, and require only short comment. For centuries malaria has sapped the vitality of people in southern lands, giving them a reputation for indolence which is not wholly deserved. Haitian peasants were during the entire nineteenth century accused of laziness; when a strapping man lay all day in the shade of a tree, it was logical enough for a white visitor to suppose that he was willfully loafing. The critics might have been more temperate if they had known what it was to be perpetually full of malaria, with a body

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baby: when she does she substitutes a mode of feeding on fruits and solids which favors digestive disturbance and nutritive diseases in the infant.

At the age when children of the élite would be starting to school, peasant children are beginning work in the fields, hoeing, weeding, and carrying, always under the tropical sun. Cuts and bruises, sometimes serious, are improperly treated when they occur and so lead to tetanus or to enormous ulcers.

Hard work and a simple mode of outdoor life prove, in Haiti at least, not to be the keys to good health which a romantic might fancy them. Haiti has been one of the unhealthiest places in the world. One feels that it has been lucky to escape such scourges as typhus, cholera, and bubonic plague; that smallpox has not been violent in its epidemics, and that the people developed an immunity to yellow fever. It has, indeed, been luck rather than cleanliness and proper medical care which has protected the people in these instances.

In 1838 Boyer founded a hospital school at Port-au-Prince, giving it the name of The National School of Medicine. It did not function as a school, however, until 1860 when Geffrard reorganized it and gave it life. Geffrard also sent young men to Europe to study, installed laboratories of physics and chemistry in the upper schools of the capital, and made possible the appearance of an intellectual élite.[11] The next burst of energy in matters of hygiene came around 1890 when, under the influence of Dr. Léon Audain, the first health records were kept, and the spirit of scientific research reached Haitian medicine.

From 1804 to 1860, then, there was practically no proper care for sick people. In the latter years of the century a few trained physicians, with sadly deficient equipment, practiced in the towns. Not until after the Occupation was the rural mass of the population even touched by the medical knowledge which had been developing all over the civilized world for decades. Clinics, wholesale vaccinations and inoculations, and campaigns of enlightenment have in the past twenty years worked wonders. The Vodun practitioner, however, still is the "expert" who treats most illnesses, and healing remains one of his major functions.

11. Geffrard established schools of law, music, painting, and navigation. The latter two collapsed. The same president founded the high schools of Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, and Gonaïves.